

Application No.: 09/997,831

Docket No.: JCLA8510

REMARKS**I. Present Status of the Application**

The Office Action rejected claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Spengler et al. (US 5,709,925). In addition, the Office Action rejected claims 2-5 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Spengler et al.

No amendments are made to the application. Claims 1-5 remain pending in the present application. For reasons set forth below, reconsideration of those claims is respectfully requested.

II. Response to Rejections**A. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)**

The Office Action, at page 2, item 3, rejected claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Spengler et al. (US 5,709,925). The Examiner states that Spengler et al. anticipate claim 1 because the Spengler's reference "provides layers that includes jute fibers and polypropylene fibers at a ratio within the range from 30:70 to 70:30," and "also provides a foaming material adhered to one side of these."

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection for at least the reason discussed below.

Claim 1 reads as:

A thermoplastic felt structure for an automobile interior substrate, comprising a pair of mat units, each mat unit having a felt layer which is made by a mixture of a jute fiber and a polypropylene fiber mixed in the weight ratio from about 5 parts by weight jute fiber to 5 parts by weight polypropylene fiber to about 6 parts by weight jute fiber to 4 parts by weight polypropylene fiber, and a polypropylene foaming resin adhered to one side of the felt layer, said mat units being coupled to each other on the other sides of the felt layers.

The present invention, as defined in claim 1, provides a thermoplastic felt structure for an automobile interior substrate. The felt structure comprises *a pair of mat units*. Each mat unit has a felt layer made by a mixture of a jute fiber and a polypropylene fiber *in the weight ratio from about 5:5 to about 6:4*, and a polypropylene foaming resin adhered to one side of the felt layer; the mat units are coupled to each other on the other sides of the felt layers.

Spengler et al. disclose a multi-layered laminated body as interior trim panel in a motor vehicle. The panel includes a substrate, a foaming intermediate layer, and a decorative surface

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layer. The substrate further includes three layers, namely a core layer and two cover layers. (Abstract; Fig. 1). The Examiner "equates the layers of the substrate of Spengler et al. to the mat units of the present invention, and the intermediate layer of Spengler et al. to the foaming resin of the present invention." It appears that the Examiner intends to equate the substrate layer of Spengler et al. to the felt layer (but not the whole mat unit), and the intermediate layer of Spengler et al. to the foaming resin of the present invention, since the mat unit of the present invention as defined in claim 1 includes both the felt layer and the foaming resin layer.

However, Spengler et al. fail to teach at least the following two limitations as recited in claim 1. First, claim 1 recites that the thermoplastic felt structure comprises "a pair of" mat units being "coupled to each other on the other sides of the felt layers." Spengler et al., however, do not teach such a limitation; instead, Spengler et al. provide *only one unit* to form a panel, which includes a substrate, a foaming intermediate layer, and a decorative surface layer. Spengler et al. disclose that the decorative layer is formed on the intermediate layer that is in turn formed on the interior cover layer of the substrate. (Fig. 1; column 4, lines 30-44). It is clear that there is only one intermediate layer in Spengler's structure and it is only coupled to one side of the substrate, but not to both sides of the substrate. While in the present invention, the foaming resin layer is formed on both sides of the felt structure (Fig. 2). This difference is technically significant. As taught in the specification (last paragraph of page 7), the symmetrical structure of the thermoplastic felt structure of the present invention prevents deformation under a plate forming process.

Secondly, composition of the substrate of Spengler et al. differs from that of the felt layer as recited in claim 1. Claim 1 provides that the felt layer is made by a mixture of a jute fiber and a polypropylene fiber in the weight ratio from about 5:5 to 6:4. Spengler et al. disclose that the core layer of the substrate 4 comprises thermoplastic matrix material 6 and filler material 5 in a ratio within the range from 30:70 to 70:30, but that the cover layers 8 and 9 have a content ratio of thermoplastic matrix material 10 relative to filler material 11 of about 70:30. Spengler et al. also disclose that the filler material 11 of the cover layers 8 and 9 may comprise natural fibers (such as jute fiber) and glass fibers, and that the thermoplastic matrix material 10 of the cover layers 8 and 9 is preferably polypropylene. (Column 5, lines 1-6 and 19-30; column 4, 61-63). Thus, Spengler et al.'s cover layers is made by a mixture of *filler material (including jute fiber)*

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and thermoplastic matrix material (preferably polypropylene fiber) in the weight ratio of 30:70; which is out of the scope of the range from about 5:5 to 6:4 of jute fiber and polypropylene fiber as recited in claim 1.

For at least the reasons discussed above, Spengler et al. cannot anticipate claim 1 since Spengler et al. fail to disclose each and every element of the claim. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

B. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

The Office Action, at page 4, item 5, rejected claims 2-5 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Spengler et al. as stated in the section of 102(b) rejection. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

As discussed in the foregoing section, Spengler et al. fail to teach at least two claimed limitations of claim 1, and thus claim 1 is patentable over Spengler et al.

Claims 2-5 are dependent on claim 1 and, thus, are also patentable over Spengler et al. for at least the same reason discussed above.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

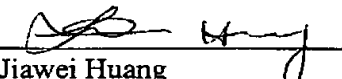
CONCLUSION

For at least the foregoing reasons, it is believed that all pending claims 1-5 are in proper condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference would expedite the examination of the above-identified patent application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,
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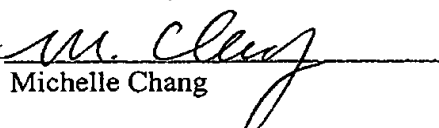
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